8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

I

The Interpretation of Custom

609 The arrival of a stranger in a west country Irish
123 town is still an event. The age of machinery has not yet destroyed the leisure of curiosity. But when the stranger shows no intent of hurrying on, like an ordinary tourist, and sports none of the weapons of field and stream, the matter assumes no mean local importance. A new bank clerk or land commissioner is expectable; he soon sinks into the colour of his position and surroundings. Even a 'returned Yank', once his parentage and probable savings have been determined, and his clothes and manners scrutinized, soon drops out of mind.

But there is no understanding a stranger whose only apparent business is to chat with people and to walk about with notebook in hand. And when he calls himself an 'anthropologist', the mystery thickens. The 'squinting windows', for which Brinsley MacNamara once named a novel of the Irish countryside, do not soon lose their squint; and an eddy of whispered speculation follows the stranger up and down the narrow old-world streets of the town.

But time brings acceptance of most mysteries.

[p 1]

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

609 It finds a formula for them that gives them a
123 familiar ring. So, the anthropologist gradually found acceptance. Even his formidable title grew easier as its translation spread. The Irish today
[212] are a very literate people. And a sudden increase in the circulation of books on anthropology
[217] from the county library helped very quickly to establish the anthropologist as 'looking for old customs'.

Once, perhaps, the translation would have been
121 adequate. But anthropology today is much more than a search for ancient custom. Even in Ireland, where the traditional Celtic life still lingers on, the anthropologist must conceive his purpose in broader terms. I want to devote this first lecture to the new purpose and its application to the Irish scene. In the remaining five lectures I shall try to present to you certain of the factors of custom and belief in the countryside of the south and west of Ireland and to analyse them in terms of the purpose we discuss here.

000 First of all we must clear up the matter of presumption. It may seem presumptuous that an anthropologist should profess to discuss the life of a modern nation. To some of us it may seem something like an engineer or a physicist, who deserts his field for metaphysics and morals. To others it may seem to betray a rather derogatory attitude toward the nation discussed. But neither desertion nor derogation can rightfully be charged. Our con-

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

124 which the hair of many of the men was cut, which often rendered dis-
[302] tinction of shade very difficult. Owing to the season most of the observations had to be made in the morning when the people were going to their work, or early in the evening when they were returning, or gathered around their cottage doors; in many cases, however, they were followed to the harvest field and measured there.

The taking of photographs did not, as elsewhere, cause the assembly
126 of the knot of spectators which usually affords so good an opportunity
● [123] for the collection of eye and hair colours; it had rather the opposite effect, as the people have a strong dislike to having their portraits taken.

In spite of these difficulties, however, I succeeded in noting the eye and hair colours of 241 individuals, on 40 of whom (being about one-fifth of the adult males of the islands) measurements and other observations were taken.

Care was exercised that none of those measured should be entered in the ordinary nigrescence cards, as well as to avoid recording the same individual twice or the noting of persons who were not natives.

(ε). *Photography.*—For the reasons already mentioned there could not be as much done in this department as had been hoped; but, in spite of the strong aversion shown by many of the people to having their portraits taken, and the strong winds prevailing during our stay, my brother, J. M. Browne, who accompanied me to do the necessary photography, succeeded in obtaining a considerable number of typical groups, as well as some single portraits in full face and profile, and a series of views illustrative of the modes of life and environment of the people.

2.—Physical Characters.

142 (α). The people, on the whole, much resemble the inhabitants of the opposite coast of Connemara, and their appearance testifies to a mixed origin. The following is believed to be a correct description of their average physical characters:—

Stature and bulk.—The men, as a rule, are stoutly built, and of medium height; very few can fairly be termed tall, and there is a very considerable proportion of men of low stature. The average height is
[141] 1633 mm., or about 5 feet 6½ inches, which falls short of the Irish mean stature as found by Gould, the Anthropometric Committee of the British Association, and others, by about two inches.

142 The women are of a slighter build than the men, and, apparently,
143 more even in height; they also show more strikingly that great simi-

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

was easier, the measuring being, in many cases, done under shelter, instead of on the hills, the roadside, or the sea-shore.

As is mentioned above the two new measurements had to be abandoned owing to practical difficulties. It is a matter of experience in work of this sort in Ireland that persons do not *come* to be measured, they have to be sought out and induced to submit themselves to the process, often no easy matter; there are generally several to be measured in quick succession, but if kept waiting long they will one by one slip off and refuse to allow measurement; and as the adapting of the anthropometer for these projections takes some time, the instrument having to be unshipped for each, and then fitted up again to measure the next comer, it became evident that these projections would have to be given up if anything like a sufficient number of persons was to be measured. Moreover, accuracy in taking projection measurements is by no means easily obtained, even under the most favourable circumstances in a laboratory, and the difficulty is increased so much in field work, where it is not at all easy to get the men to understand exactly what position they are wanted to assume, so as to make the results unreliable.

The noting of the colours of the hair and eyes also presented some difficulties, the chief being to distinguish between those who were natives and strangers from other districts, which was rendered greater by the absence of a distinctive dress (except in the case of the people of Inishkea). In spite of these difficulties, however, I succeeded in noting the eye and hair colours of 494 individuals, on 62 (male adults) of whom the full series of measurements and observations was made. As on the two former surveys precautions were taken against recording the same person twice, as well as against the inclusion of the men measured in the ordinary nigrescence cards.

(D). *Photography.*—Owing to the rain and rough weather as much could not be done in this department as had been hoped, but in spite of the difficulties of cloudy skies and high winds a number of photographs were taken, including, 17 portraits, 14 of them individuals measured, 12 groups, taken in all parts of the district, 30 illustrations of the occupations, modes of transport, and habitations of the people, also several of the antiquities of the district, and a set of views showing surface of land and nature of coast line, &c.

Some of these photographs were taken by myself, others by my brother J. M. Browne. The addition of the hand camera to our appliances has proved to be a great advantage, enabling portraits of unwilling subjects to be taken, and adding to the value of the photo-

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

Foreword

About the Series

000 These case studies in cultural anthropology are designed to bring to students, in beginning and intermediate courses in the social sciences, insights into the richness and complexity of human life as it is lived in different ways and in different places. They are written by men and women who have lived in the societies they write about and who are professionally trained as observers and interpreters of human behavior. The authors are also teachers, and in writing their books they have kept the students who will read them foremost in their minds. It is our belief that when an understanding of ways of life very different from one's own is gained, abstractions and generalizations about social structure, cultural values, subsistence techniques, and the other universal categories of human social behavior become meaningful.

About the Author

114 John C. Messenger is a professor in the Department of Anthropology, the Folklore Institute, and the Program of African Studies at Indiana University. He received his Ph.D. from Northwestern University and taught at Michigan State University and Carleton College before joining the Indiana University [122] faculty. In 1951 and 1952, he conducted fieldwork among the Anang of southeastern Nigeria as an Area Research Training Fellow of the Social Science Research Council; his research during 1959 and 1960, which provided the bulk of the data reported herein, was supported by an Exchange Scholarship to Eire administered by An Bord Scolairteachtai Comalairte of Dublin. Professor Messenger has published numerous articles, chapters in books, and monographs concerning the cultures of the Anang, the Irish, and the Montserrat islanders of the West Indies, whom he studied in 1965 and 1967. A grant from the Indiana University Ford International Program enabled him to write a substantial portion of this volume.

About the Book

114 This is a case study of a people widely known through the media of
121 journalism and film. Imbedded in a context of romanticism and nativism, the
• 123 image of the people and their culture created by these media scarcely approximates reality, for reasons that Dr. Messenger makes clear both in his discussion of nativism and the reasons for its strong influence on characterizations of Irish folk,

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

and in his descriptive analysis of the culture and social structure of Inis Beag. For these reasons the book will doubtless raise controversy among Irish journalists, particularly those of nativistic persuasion.

Dr. Messenger describes the folk and their culture as he sees them, and within the conceptual structure of the social sciences. The picture that emerges is less heroic than the current romanticized idealization, and very human. The author's personal identification with the island and its people is obvious. He struggles to maintain an objective stance, and largely succeeds, but it is obvious that he and his wife participated exuberantly in the life of Inis Beag. This is in the best tradition of anthropological fieldwork. The problems of identification, friendship, rejection and acceptance, and ambivalence that are invariably associated with such participation are common to all of us who have had this kind of experience.

The case study is notable for its human qualities. It is a descriptive analysis of a significant folk way of life heretofore unrepresented in this series. It is also notable for its significance as an analysis of a closed community that provides mobility only by migration, and for the analysis of the influence of puritanism. This latter emphasis is particularly valuable, for too often we assume that puritanism is associated only with Protestantism. Here, the inter-relationships with Catholicism, particularly with the Jansenist denial of sexuality, is made very clear. Dr. Messenger pursues these themes at both the social and the psychological levels. The case study is also characterized by a strong focus, especially appropriate in the Irish folk context, on folklore, Christian reinterpretations of pagan elements, music, song, and dance. And the dimensions of life that are featured in most ethnographies are well developed—subsistence, material culture, social organization and social control, and values and religion. Dr. Messenger is also careful to provide a historical introduction to Inis Beag, in the context of relevant aspects of Irish history.

GEORGE AND LOUISE SPINDLER
General Editors

Portola Valley, Calif.
May 1969

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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628
829 passersby, and live more frugally and save more as a result. Gruff, impatient, and
often impolite, they talk rapidly in high pitched voices and shout at their beasts
[293] and at one another from a distance, and on occasion they will use profanity. Inis
Thiar men drink more than Inis Beag men, it is claimed; rather than sipping
slowly and savoring their stout and whiskey, they consume it quickly and are more
concerned with the effects that it produces. It is admitted in Inis Beag that all
Irish are inquisitive and disposed to gossip about their fellows, but islanders to
the west are openly so and will "demand" information from tourists and will
[593] discuss one another quite freely. Braver, "bolder," and less concerned with morality,
men from Inis Thiar rowed to the freighter on several occasions and contested
successfully with local folk for salvage, which caused some Inis Beag wives to
[562] deride their husbands for not possessing these qualities. Women of Inis Thiar also
are thought to be braver and bolder, and remain less in their homes, visit relatives
and acquaintances and the shops more often, and in general participate more in
social events than do their sisters to the east. Despite being extremely critical of
Inis Thiar folk for possessing the above and many other less prominent traits, the
people of Inis Beag grudgingly admit that their neighbors possess greater *esprit*
[167] *de corps* and enjoy life more than themselves. Once a person emigrates from Inis
Beag, he or she seldom returns; but Inis Thiar emigrants are "clever" and do well
abroad, and often return with earnings to remain at home, especially women who
come back with "fortunes" to seek husbands.

829 The attitudes of islanders toward those living on the mainland—"towns-
186 people" or "city folk"—reveal a primitivistic bias which probably can be traced
[121] back to the Viking occupation, when towns first were established in Ireland and
primitive Celts became transformed into peasants: "that primitive people retain
a morality which civilized people tend to lose; that a man's moral worth declines
in rough proportion to his distance from the soil; that civilization must be held
accountable for man's noteworthy catalogue of vices;" (Ardrey 1961:147–148).
Inis Beag folk regard themselves as impeccably moral and mainlanders, although
fellow Catholics, as immoral; yet the "progressiveness" of the latter is envied
secretly and gives rise to the sensitivity of islanders to the real and imagined
denigration of them by mainlanders for their backwardness. Mainland Irish are
[291] thought to be overly pecuniary, dishonest, rude, and promiscuous. When visiting
towns and cities on the mainland, Inis Beag people for many years have worn main-
land attire so as not to be singled out and ridiculed. They are ashamed of their
English speech—even though adults speak the tongue with greater proficiency
than many urban dwellers—and believe that they are prey to dishonest shopkeepers,
[123] who are ever ready to take advantage of their ignorance and naiveté. Whenever
my wife and I paid short visits to a nearby port or to Dublin, we were requested by
islanders to make purchases, have repairs made under our name, and transact other
business for them because we were "too clever to be cheated." Once in the city, the
folk miss Inis Beag with its clear air and broad expanses, and they complain of
the tall buildings (seldom more than four stories high) which "press in" on them,
the bustle of the main street, the curious stares of townspeople, and the dirtiness
of buildings and roads. In claiming that few islanders would prefer to live there

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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000 Strangers who spend weeks or months in Inis Beag and are able to grasp some of the realities of life there often leave emotionally distraught, knowing that they 609 never will be accepted by the people. Acceptance by the islanders is a problem faced by not only outsiders, but by immigrants. The latter remain strangers for two or three generations, and some people, particularly descendants of fisherfolk, are regarded as outsiders despite the fact that the families of some have resided in [152] Inis Beag for almost a century. Later we will learn that the islanders have difficulty [602] forming affectional bonds among themselves, even among kin; thus, they are able to give even less of themselves to those "who do not belong." Strangers who know Inis Beag well often complain that they must do all of the "giving," as the folk can only "take."

The islanders also share attitudes toward other individuals and groups, which I can mention only in passing. Among the most important are those concerning outsiders who have lived in Inis Beag for long periods of time (the expatriate Dane, lighthouse keepers, Brendan Behan the writer, and Siobhain McKenna the actress); writers who have composed works about the island and have dwelled there or are folk themselves; particular persons from Inis Thiar and other nearby islands (a policeman, a teacher, a man of great strength, a keeper of a guest house, and a man who provides taxi service between the islands and the mainland in a small boat); peasants from bordering counties; religious groups (Protestants generally, members of the Church of Ireland, Jews, and even Italian Catholics); ethnic and racial groups (Americans, English, Germans, Negroes, tinkers, and foreigners as a class); and, finally, politicians and government bureaucrats and the Irish press.

609 I know of but few cases of discrimination practiced against any of these, 829 but prejudices held against some of them abound, based either on historical 186 experiences (with the English and the Church of Ireland) or on views inculcated by returned emigrants (concerning Jews and Negroes, who seldom visit Inis Beag). • [123] Islanders, as well as most Irish, are ambivalent about "Yanks," as visiting emigrants from the United States are called, but are mostly critical of them; often my wife and I have been asked on first meeting an Irish person whether we are Irish-Americans or "real Americans," and when we have admitted to being the latter we have been well received. Conversely, we have seen Yanks shunned on revealing their pedigree. They are accused of "lording it over" their Irish kin and friends.

Formal Social Control

000 Anthropologists customarily classify social control systems as formal and informal. Formal systems are governments whose controls are based on physical violence or its threat—physical punishment, ostracism, banishment, and extermination; while informal systems include sanctions of a religious or economic nature and those exercised by primary groups—gossip, ridicule, persuasion, and opprobrium. Controls of a negative nature are buttressed by positive rewards, such as services provided by a government or the feeling of security gained from primary group approval. It is not the formal system of local and national governments

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unlicensed dogs, or when they discover a still on the mainland and arrest the "poor creatures" who were manufacturing "poteen" (illicit whiskey). They sometimes are called "peelers" in reference, a derogatory term assigned to their predecessors, the Royal Irish Constabulary, founded by Sir Robert Peel. (The Irish chose his surname to immortalize and the English his Christian name—"bobbie.") Seven verses of my ballad satirize the much resented role of the police during the aftermath of the shipwreck. The absence of guards in Inis Beag means that the pubs can stay open after legal hours, sometimes until two or three o'clock in the morning; and in the island where the police are stationed, one must enter the pubs after hours, if permitted, by the back door and drink sitting on the floor.

The *Guide to the Social Services*, published by the Dublin Stationary Office in 1959, lists under 76 headings the multitudinous services and subsidies provided the Irish people by local and central governments. Among the most important to Inis Beag folk are: Widow's Pension, Old Age Pension (called "the old age"), Unemployment Assistance (know as "the dole"), Children's Allowances, General Medical Services, General Institutional and Specialist Services, Mental Treatment, Disabled Persons Maintenance Allowances, Maternity and Infant Services, Free School Books in National Schools, Employment and Special Emergency Schemes (which include road improvement), Agricultural Education, Schemes of Agricultural Development, Gaeltacht Eireann Schemes (which include housing and language subsidies), Private Housing Grants and Loans, Local Authority Housing, and Land Commission Housing. Most of these programs are handled by civil servants who visit Inis Beag from a nearby island or the mainland, and at any time during the year there is usually at least one government agent conducting his business in the island. The services and subsidies are welcomed by the folk even though seldom considered adequate, and only one arouses bitter antagonism: elders dislike the law which requires them to will their land at age 70 before they can go on the old age, as well as the probing of functionaries who request personal information of potential old age pensioners, especially information about remittance monies which might disqualify the applicants. Almost all of the islanders are on the dole, and few express outwardly embarrassment or shame as regards the fact —"The government has a right to give us the dole."

Informal Social Control

The informal social control system of Inis Beag comprises the parish priest and curate, the headmaster of the school—chosen and strictly regulated by the parish priest, and a "king." The position of king is not hereditary and not supported by a majority of the population as in some other Irish islands, but is self-assumed and based on a number of factors to be considered shortly. Not only is king strictly a term of reference, but it is employed by the folk only when they are most critical of his actions; it also is used by certain outsiders who are frequent visitors to Inis Beag and are aware of the power structure there, but always out of earshot of the islanders.

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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779
114 The role of the church in Irish history has been well documented, albeit often in a biased manner because of the prejudices of certain historians, but its role in shaping Irish culture and personality has been little examined. Irish social scientists either have been oblivious to it because of being Catholics themselves, or have been fearful of the political and religious consequences were they to pursue and publish the "truth;" foreign scientists, on the other hand, have shown little interest in Ireland, or have suppressed their data on religious influences in order to be able to return there to do further research.

779
815 Whereas in developing countries anthropologists are being restricted increasingly by elitists sensitive to the primitive conditions in their nations which are being studied and publicized by scientists, in Ireland similar reactions of nativists, including those who are in the government, are compounded by those of the church. The resistance of the church to objective scrutiny in large measure explains the absence of ethnology—with its emphasis on such values as empiricism, naturalism, relativism, and pluralism—as a discipline in the national universities. Irish scholars have tended to stress economic and other monistic causes (especially climate, race, English oppression, the famine, and loss of the Irish tongue) in their
• [123] analyses of culture and personality phenomena. I have talked with Irish scientists about religious forces as aspects of particular phenomena, and have been told that to acknowledge certain of these in print would be to commit job suicide.
[122] When I have discussed with them my own conclusions about factors accounting for such conditions in Inis Beag as celibacy, late marriage, personality disorders, and emigration, and have cited religious causes as among the most significant ones, my listeners have agreed tacitly and changed the subject, or have remained silent. Irish scientists visiting the United States, I might add, usually endorse my views but often ask not to be quoted abroad or in print. Religious causes are, in fact, so important and pervasive that one runs the risk of being declared a "religious determinist" if he deals objectively with his materials.

793 The bishop and the parish priest in theory direct the actions of the curate in Inis Beag, but it is believed by the folk that their control over him in reality is only nominal, and that he often is able to make and carry out major decisions affecting the welfare of the islanders without consulting his superiors. His supposed freedom of action is reflected in the commonly voiced complaint that if word of his secular "excesses" were to reach the bishop, he would be reprimanded or replaced. However, some say that his policies are known and secretly approved
[123] of by his superiors. It is rumored that I was responsible for the replacement of a curate by complaining of his opposition to my research and certain of his excesses to mainlanders who had the "ear of the bishop."

779
793 The folk are devoutly Catholic, despite the fact that they are extremely
795 critical of their priests and retain and reinterpret pagan religious forms. They are proud of their strength of belief, with its attendant morality, and of the sanctity of
181 "Inis Beag of the Saints," and they look to the curate for spiritual comfort, as well as political guidance in several spheres, and are uncomfortable in his absence.
[789] His presence, it is believed, provides supernatural protection for the island, while
[776] his absence invites possible anti-social behavior, and harm to the soul of one who

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the folk. Chronic negligence in the care of chapel and school is regarded as a symptom of the indifference of the clerics (or laziness, according to some), as is their seeming unwillingness to provide leadership at crucial times. The intrusion of the clergy into spheres of island life where their influence is unwarranted, according to local opinion, and their methods of controlling behavior give rise to the greatest amount of criticism, but need not be considered further at this juncture. As elsewhere in Ireland, and a source of countless humorous anecdotes and jokes, the style of life of many priests contributes to anti-clericalism. The comfort of the curates' home (particularly the new one erected since 1960, by one islander called "the house indulgences built"), their menu, their offering of tobacco and whiskey to guests, their visits to mainland, Continent, and even America, are all discussed frequently and resentfully by the folk.

Linked with the much criticized life style of clerics are the many demands made on the islanders for monetary contributions. It is felt that the diocese is wealthy enough to support the parish priest and his curates and need not "keep the people poor" by forcing them to donate money and services without charge for their upkeep. In addition to regular offerings on Sunday, the people are called on to proffer more substantial sums at Christmas, Easter, and on several other occasions during the year. My wife and I made donations at Christmas and Easter despite the urging of many not to do so—"You are hated by the priests, so why give them money?" The names of contributors and their donations are announced from the pulpit or posted in the chapel. This practice is another control technique of sorts and infuriates many of the folk.

Other major sources of antagonism toward the clergy are their poor Gaelic and the fact that they urge the people to speak only Irish yet converse among themselves in English; their criticism of valued island customs, particularly of pagan reinterpretations; their conservatism and resistance to change, which results in the folk being ill prepared to emigrate when they must; their susceptibility to influence by the king, especially those who are newly graduated and are uncertain of themselves and their role; and their demands on canoe crews which must row them back and forth to Inis Thiar and other islands, often in dangerous weather. A conception of what the curate "ought to be like" was voiced by a pious but troubled woman: "He should be humble, not have money when so many poor are about, not treat the people as inferior, and not be afraid to work hard."

It is difficult to ascertain today whether the headmaster or the king should be accorded the dominant position, after the curate, in the informal social control system of Inis Beag; for in recent years, the power and prestige of the former have been waxing and those of the latter waning. Headmasters were formerly older men with families whose tenure was long, who were much involved in local affairs and worked closely with the curate, who were politically active and backed candidates and tried to influence island voters, and who maintained social distance although considered "one of the people." For their teaching and other services, they were provided with food, given *curach* transportation without charge, and afforded other amenities by the folk. The house that they and their families occupied until recently is located in Castle Village, near both the old and new schools, and was owned by the diocese. Headmasters now are younger and often single, and are

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624 875 [795] [554] more independent of the curate (One in recent years quit his post, it is held, because he chafed at restrictions imposed on him by the priest.); also, they are apolitical and participate less in the gamut of local affairs. The prestige of the headmaster derives from his having been selected by the parish priest who supports his actions, his status as a "scholar," and the discipline that he exerts in the school with its vestigial effects on those who have graduated. Few islanders will openly contest his decisions in school and in civic matters.

The important nonacademic tasks performed by the headmaster are signing official forms—a duty that he shares with the bailiff, drawing up and witnessing the signing of wills, writing letters for the islanders, especially those directed to the county council and departments of the central government, and giving advice on such matters as the advisability of emigrating and of matrimonial matches. [591] Like the curates, the headmasters seldom have tried to direct community projects and social affairs, other than dances and inter-island competitions. The present headmaster considers himself atypical in many respects, in that he is youthful, has exceptional skill in playing the accordion, likes companionship and the festivities of party and pub, and has rapport with older boys and young men with whom he associates more than did his predecessors; as a result, he is the prime mover in social events—organizing dances and donating his musical talent. Older islanders often find him aloof and will apologize for "taking his time" when seeking favors of him.

895 593 Parents have little contact with the headmaster as regards the education of their children, and, although permitted and sometimes urged to do so, they seldom visit the school. They will consult with him about such matters as health problems of their children, but not about educational policies; nor do they complain to him 895 of his role as pedagogue—"What the teacher does is right." Because of the severity 896 of his discipline, and that of the other two teachers, and the fear that it arouses in [861] his pupils, parents use him as a threat in disciplining their children at home. This is a distinction that he shares with the nurse and her hypodermic needle and me • [123] with my large size and robust manner; being the ominous *Fear an Stáisiún* ("Man of the Station," because my wife and I rented for a time an apartment in the coast guard station) made it difficult for me to obtain young people as respondents until many months had passed. As a result of the rigid discipline exerted in the school, maintained by actions which include even whipping and priestly imprecation, a degree of orderliness, quietness, and attentiveness on the part of the students is achieved which would arouse incredulity among American teachers and parents [171] unless witnessed. Discipline in the school merely reflects that in the home, and a favorite pastime of Irish living in the vicinity of Shannon Airport is to observe the interaction of American parents and their usually obstreperous offspring in the transient room there.

624 [829] Whereas the headmaster attracts the least amount of anti-authority sentiment of any other figure who regulates to a marked degree the lives of the folk, the king attracts the most. The latter is the senior of the two publicans, in age and role, whose home in Low Village accommodates guests as well as the shop and [123] pub. Information concerning him was as difficult to come by as that concerning curates whom I knew, in that he resented my presence and refused to cooperate

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with me in my research; thus, I am forced to depend on data about his career provided me by his neighbors. It is hard to disentangle fact from hearsay in these materials, for he arouses extremes of feeling among islanders which can prompt distortions of information. I was told by several respondents—bitter foes of the king—that he conceives of himself as the moral guardian of the folk "who knows what is best for them;" he believes them to possess a childlike mentality and outlook on the world which necessitate his guidance (In talking with these respondents, who referred to the king as "the little priest," I was reminded of interviews in Africa seven years earlier concerning particular British colonial administrators, who conceived of their relationship with the Nigerians in like manner.).

A personable man of great charm, the king has a measure of charisma which commands deference and respect, and it is said that had he chosen to become a priest or businessman on the mainland, he would now be a bishop or captain of industry. His business acumen is acclaimed, and many have become his customers because they believe him to be more "clever" than city merchants and well able to deal with them to the advantage of the islanders. The sources of his power are many. He began his career as a shopkeeper in the 1920s, with money provided him by a brother living in the United States (or, as claimed by some, with the insurance money that he received as a beneficiary when his brother was killed while serving in the armed forces of this country). Two brothers older than himself—the eldest the landholder—live in Inis Beag with large families, and he has their support and that of his many other kin. He gained a large following during the depression years of the 1930s by extending credit to customers for months without charging interest; many folk still show gratitude for this gesture by buying only from him and by acquiescing to many of his wishes, although covertly they may resent being in his debt and under his influence. He is a friend of priests, politicians, and civil servants, who usually reside in his guest house when visiting Inis Beag, and he is a political activist in behalf of "Dev" and Fianna Fail. Another source of his power is the fact that he cashes most of the checks and changes most of the foreign currency received by the islanders, and thus knows of sources and amounts of income; it is feared that he might inform government officials of remittances and as a result jeopardize the old age and dole of any who earn his displeasure.

The king is most criticized for his "great riches," which arouse envy and jealousy in his neighbors. From time to time, rumors as to the amount of money deposited to his account in a mainland bank pass around Inis Beag, and arouse discussion of the bill of particulars against him. His involvement in the salvaging of the cargo of the grounded freighter brought to the surface all of the hostility toward him felt by the folk. He is supposed to have pooled his resources with several businessmen "from the city" to purchase the most valuable items of the cargo for resale at a "vast profit;" to safeguard these items until they could be salvaged and shipped off on the steamer, he consorted with owners of the steamship company, customs officials, the guards, and even the curate to prevent the islanders ("who only saved the lives of the crew") from observing the law of wrack and thereby reducing his profit. It is held that he persuaded the curate to deliver sermons denouncing the "looting" of the ship as sinful, and he allowed his

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521 203 591 is carried to the post office, for fear that the postmaster will open letters and talk publicly of their contents (or take money from them). It is customary for boys and young men to hide themselves in the darkness or behind fences in order to overhear conversations of passersby, or witness their misbehavior, which can be reported; this compels folk who move about after dark to conceal their faces and talk in whispers or low tones. When a person hidden in the darkness is accosted suddenly, he will vault a fence, run away, or crouch down and hide his face or draw a [514] [612] raincoat over his head and shoulders to avoid being recognized. Most social events and visiting take place after sundown, so that movements from one house to another will be unobserved.

626 Deviant behavior once learned of assures its perpetrators of becoming the focus of gossip and ridicule. But ridicule seldom is voiced in the presence of the victim; rather, he or she is told of it by relatives and acquaintances who have [638] [639] witnessed or, more commonly, been told of it by others. My ballad not only took advantage of the ubiquity of rumor, but its composition, aided and abetted by two dozen respondents, enabled me to discover the existence of a seldom revealed tradition of satirical balladry, common to the Irish, which has singled out for opprobrium many folk in the past. During three summer visits to Inis Beag following 1960, my wife and I were able to witness the singing of my song publicly. We learned that it, as others of its genre, is sung only before small gatherings, and whether or not it (or certain of its verses) is sung and by whom depends on the makeup of the assembled group. Since ridicule is almost never expressed in [123] the presence of its victim or his kin or close friends, we were able to gain information about kinship relations and factionalism by noting the juxtaposition of balladiers and audiences and which verses were sung.

Courtship and Marriage

582 589 162 Marriages are fewer and are entered into later in Ireland than in any other Western country. In 1951, approximately one-third of the men and one-quarter of the women in Ireland between the ages of 55 and 64 years had never married, while two-thirds of the men and two-fifths of the women between 25 and 34 years of age were single. Celibacy and age of marriage figures for Inis Beag approximate those for the rest of peasant Ireland. In a population of 350 persons, 116 are married; 13 are widows; 3 are widowers; and 33 males over 23 years of age and 21 females over 17 are single. Since marriage occurs between the ages of 24 and 45 years for men and 18 and 32 for women, based on statistics extending back to 1911, only 18 men and 9 women (excluding 3 women who, because of physical disabilities, probably never will marry) are eligible for marriage. Not only are 34.4 percent of the males bachelors and 22.6 percent of the females spinsters, but the average marriage age for men in the period 1951 to 1960 was 35.5 years and for women 24.8 (compared to an average for rural Ireland of 34.7 582 years for men and 28.7 for women in 1946). The age span between spouses married during the past half-century ranges from the husband being 21 years older than his wife to 4 years younger, but the average age span has been between 8 and 12 years for each of the five decades. The number of marriages per decade has been

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women. They arise largely out of personality clashes and are expressed in gossip and withdrawal. As in Aughnaboy, none of the disputes between men appear to be based on competition for women, although jealousy of a rival and anger at being rejected have spurred a few disputes involving particular women and couples. One of the important causes of personality conflict in the island is the dogmatism of the folk. They are quick to form opinions, often on the basis of inadequate information, and cling tenaciously to them once they are voiced publicly. Thus, a simple difference of views concerning a topic between two persons can grow into a serious altercation lasting a lifetime—and beyond. One facet of this dogmatism is the local belief that the character of a person can be assessed accurately on first meeting him. I became the victim of a dispute of sorts by telling a man that my "first impressions" of a new acquaintance often are wrong, and that I prefer to interact for some time with the individual before passing judgment on him; this admittance branded me as deficient in character and one to be "withdrawn" from, and I never made it again.

I have mentioned that dependence on the guided interview can prevent an observer from gaining insight into disputes among Irish and Inis Beag peasants; this is so because dysfunctional social relations are kept carefully hidden from outsiders—the conscious models concerning disputes not only are incorporated into the self-image of the islanders but are urged on strangers. The concern for kin, acquaintances, and particular groups manifested in speech and behavior, which at times can be most sentimental, cannot be taken at face value. The emigrating relative whose departure provokes tears on the strand may be forgotten quickly, and his absence even heralded, in the privacy of the home, and the mourners at a graveside may include many who display indifference when thought to be unobserved while kneeling in the rear ranks. This state of affairs gives rise to a brief consideration of the problems associated with procuring reliable data.

Honor Tracy, in the first chapter (aptly entitled "Forebodings") of her book, *Mind You I've Said Nothing*, humorously predicts the various reactions that her volume will stimulate in Irish readers She concludes with the following statement about the difficulties surrounding fact-finding in Ireland:

> This question of fact was another of the spectres hovering in my path. In every book there should be a fact here and there or the writer is charged with aimless frivolity. But facts in Ireland are very peculiar things. They are rarely allowed to spoil the sweep and flow of conversation: the crabbing effect they have on good talk is eliminated almost entirely. I do not believe myself that the Irishman conveniently ignores their existence, as sometimes is said, so much as that he is blithely unaware of it. He soars above their uninviting surfaces on the wing of his fancy. Who then would answer my questions truthfully, who would supply me with that modicum of sober and accurate information required to give my book a serious air? No one, as far as I knew. And if facts are elusive and shadowy things in Ireland, opinions are more so. An Irishman . . . will say not what he thinks but what he believes you would like him to think; he is a man of honeyed words, anxious to flatter and soothe, cajole and caress . . . [He does not] reveal his own true thoughts if, to be sure, he has any. He would be in dread lest you quoted him and the story went around and he got the name of a bold outspoken fellow, which might be bad for business. And then again so many Irishmen find an innocent glee in misleading and deceiving for its own sake.

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tunity to create additional capital; they are content to rest on their psychological
[157] laurels, are limited in their aspirations, and are indolent. They betray a smugness
[124] of attitude much resented by their less prestigeful fellows. A woman spoke contemptuously of the "great estates" boasted of by these men, when she discussed with me the many land disputes that she had witnessed during her lifetime.

554 When one asks the folk to rank prestige symbols and the positions of
556 individuals in the status hierarchy, the only consensus which emerges is the
423 placing of land and capital at the apex of the rank order of symbols, the assigning of men who possess these in greatest quantity to the top of the hierarchy, and the placing of landless men at the bottom. Least prestigeful among the landless are those who are descendants of fisherfolk, most of whose families were recent migrants to Inis Beag. An example of the verbal abuse to which they are subjected is a remark made to one of them by the king in a heated argument, who said, "Why don't you spend your time gathering periwinkles like your father?"; the man replied with equal venom, "Who was your father, a king?" Other prestige symbols delineated by the folk, although not mentioned by all and variously ranked, are advanced education, prestigeful kin abroad, economic skills, and singing, dancing, and storytelling abilities. Strength and courage occasionally are cited, but they are considered symbols of a past era (which nativism and primitivism make difficult to assess) and have come to lose much of their significance.

[178]

554 Only one family in the island prides itself on its material possessions,
556 because of the influence of the householder's brother in the United States who
[123] sends remittances, so it is said, and often visits Inis Beag for lengthy stays. I was asked to take photographs of this family, whose members posed before various pieces of modern furniture and appliances, to be sent to relatives—the only such
[356] request ever made of me. There are a few families, however, which pride themselves
[515] on the neatness and cleanliness of their houses and streets and the appearance
171 of their members, and they are apt to denigrate families which are slovenly. The
[184] lack of emphasis on material possessions in Inis Beag presents a startling contrast to the situation which prevails in most of the Western world, including many peasant societies and the mainland Irish; equally contrasting is the apparent lack of opprobrium attached to doing relief work on the roads and receiving the dole.

555 Although 28 islanders have received some secondary education during the
871 past 15 years (excluding priests and nuns), only 2 have attended university—both of them before the Second World War at University College, Dublin. Two women and a man have become teachers, and the former have returned to Inis Beag to teach in the national school. Most of the advanced students today are preparing to teach or nurse or are gaining technical skills, and it is not expected by their parents that they will return to the island to live permanently. Families are boastful of their members with advanced education, and those families without such representation often urge their children to do better in the local school, and try to muster financial support for their high school education if scholarships are not forthcoming. I was told by a man disgusted with the lack of interest in school shown by his son, "The man who uses a pen is better off than the man who uses a
567 spade or trammel net." Prestige also is gained through having a close relative
793 become a nun or priest or achieve success in the business or professional world,
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526 struggling opponent of 16 stones (224 pounds) in a pub fight. A famous writer
181 claimed that he introduced into Inis Beag a feat of agility that he had learned in
[177] France, which consists of holding a stick in both hands at the knees and jumping back and forth across it without losing grip; the islanders attest that this "trick" was known locally for at least a century, and one man boasted that his father was
• 123 able to leap back and forth a dozen times in quick succession. My rapport with the men was enhanced by the fact that I had been a weight thrower and lifter and used to entertain them by putting a granite boulder, throwing a discus that I had brought with me, and performing repetition presses with a barrel of stout. However, the one time that I was persuaded to compete for Inis Beag against Inis Thiar in putting the shot (a flat-bottomed store weight of 14 pounds), I fouled with my foot all three times and thus suffered ignominious defeat. The curate who officiated at the event appeared pleased, but the islanders who had placed wagers on me were of opposite disposition.

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779 The islanders know little of church dogma and the purport of rituals and feast days. What knowledge they do possess often is distorted, and they seldom read the Bible or manuals of instruction or engage in doctrinal discussions among
[122] themselves. I discovered by consulting priests and church histories, dictionaries,
[123] and exegeses—both before and during my stay in Inis Beag—that I came to know far more about the faith than any of the folk, and I sometimes imparted what I had learned to the curious in homes and even in the pubs. Instruction is welcomed by the islanders, but they dislike criticism from any quarter of their idiosyncratic Catholic observances, pagan retentions and reinterpretations, and non-Christian behavior. They also dislike being told, especially by returned emigrants, that "Catholic culture" in Ireland is quite unlike that in other parts of the world and arouses dismay and even incredulity in many foreign Catholics who visit Ireland.

771 The paths to salvation, according to the islanders, are threefold: obeying
793 the curate, performing the rituals of the church diligently and punctiliously, and
776 conforming to the moral laws of Christianity. Being saved, however, is to them
165 much more a matter of escaping Hell than of achieving Purgatory and eventually Heaven, and they experience more anxiety about failing to conform to the moral laws than pride in conforming to them. Furthermore, it is sins of thought rather than sins of deed which preoccupy them. While they boast of their morality as expressed in behavior, they labor under a heavy burden of guilt arising out of repressed sexual desires, jealousy and envy of their neighbors, and anti-clerical sentiment, among other attitudes. It is difficult for most of them to confess these to the priest, and thus their feelings of guilt and fear of damnation are compounded. Many times in Inis Beag I heard a "good Catholic" defined as one who "thinks mostly of death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell" and guides his conduct accordingly. Life on earth is regarded as merely a brief prelude to the "eternity stretching beyond the grave," to be lived only in preparation for the Day of Judgment and borne patiently in all its "pain and suffering." Priests and nuns are envied for many reasons, among them the fact that they can "spend most of their time preparing for death" and thus are in a better position to achieve salvation.

771 It is apparent to outside observers and to the folk alike that women are
562 more pious than men. They attend church more regularly, are more serious of
[829] mien at mass and during other religious observances, and are more prone to talk
[788] of religious matters than men. Many women go to mass daily, and it is said that all of the women of the island, but only ten men, have evaded going to Hell magically by attending mass nine Fridays in succession after Ash Wednesday (or, according to some, the first Friday in each month for nine successive months, or
[154] the first Friday after Ash Wednesday for nine years in succession). The reasons for this are several, but the most important are that women are less contented than men and thus have a greater need for the solace that religion affords, and they are more restricted socially than men and by fulfilling various church obligations can escape household confinement and interact with other women. Some
771 828 islanders are thought to be overly pious—"wear their religion on their sleeves"—and are subjects of amusement and derision; those who use piety to cloak avarice

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and other Christian vices are detested and are likely to become the butt of satirical anecdotes and ballads.

In many primitive and peasant societies, in which Christianity has dispossessed polytheistic religions, it has been observed that polytheism has left a legacy whereby the Virgin Mary and various angels and saints are worshipped as dispensers of personal power in their own right. This has been extended to the Trinity among the Anang of Nigeria, who believe that God provided independent power for his human son, Jesus, with which to convert the world to Christianity, and for the Holy Spirit (who has joined the indigenous pantheon of spirits) to act for mankind as healer, prognosticator, forgiver of sins, and protector against ghosts, witches, and sorcerers (Messenger 1959:291). Most Inis Beag folk regard God and the Devil, among Christian supernatural beings, as the only possessors of personal power. But some think that power emanating from the deity is manipulated by the Blessed Virgin and particular saints, and they as well as he must be propitiated for best results. When asked why she prayed to St. Enda rather than to other saints, an old woman said that this saint is "nearer to God" and therefore able to capture more of his power than others. A few islanders hold that these intermediary entities possess power not emanating from the deity, and thus may be approached individually through prayer and sacrifice for their favor. The saints most often appeased are St. Patrick, St. Brigid, St. Enda, and the patron saint of the island.

The Devil is thought to command power for evil as great as or greater than that of the Virgin Mary and the saints for good. Some believe that he controls malevolent pagan beings as well as his own minions from Hell, and he both tempts Christians to sin and attacks them bodily causing sickness, injury, and other misfortunes. He is abroad at all times, although his power is amplified on such occasions as Allhallows' Eve, and sometimes he can be seen by human eyes—as a huge, dark, indistinct figure standing at a distance, usually after nightfall or when it is raining heavily. One evening during a severe storm, I visited without advance notice a man milking his cow at the back of the island, and he would not approach me as I stood atop a fence wearing oilskin and sou'wester until I called out to him and established the fact that I was not the "big fellow" come to do him harm. Animals are especially sensitive to the presence of Satan, and asses which run about braying loudly are believed to have seen him.

The folk do not admit to dissent or skepticism as regards their Catholic faith, despite their anti-clerical attitudes, but skepticism can be inferred from many of their utterances. Most doubt centers around the reality of the hereafter and its nature, if it exists. Invariably when I talked of religion with them, whether singly or in groups, my own views of the afterworld were solicited eagerly, and such remarks as the following, pronounced with anxiety, were forthcoming from them: "Is there really a life after death?", "Will we meet relatives there?", "Is it bodies or souls that live in Heaven?", "If we all meet in Heaven, won't it be too crowded?", "How could God be so cruel as to put people in a big fire?", and "Sure, no one has ever returned to tell of the afterlife." The most public expression of skepticism that my wife and I encountered was in a pub when she was requested to sing "Galway Bay" before a crowd of boisterous men; after she sang the line, "And if

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and its fate. In further mocking his fellows for their apprehensions about death and its aftermath, he proclaimed that the soul, "if there is such a thing, goes nowhere after the heart stops beating."

Celtic deities no longer are a part of the belief system of the islanders, but the culture heroes of the Iron Age—such as Cuchulainn, Finn, and Oisin—still are extolled in legends, and the promontory fort and other ancient monuments and some of the geographical features (for instance, glacial boulders) in Inis Beag and nearby islands are explained by the actions of Celtic heroes. Spirits, demons, and witches of many sorts are the supernatural beings from the Celtic, and possibly pre-Celtic, era which figure most importantly in the pagan segment of the folk religion. They have become incorporated into orthodox Catholicism by being declared "works of the Devil" by those who admit to their existence (It is said that two priests of peasant background have admitted to this belief publicly in Inis Beag.)—a reinterpretation resorted to by many primitive and folk peoples under the duress of acculturation with dominance. The spiritual entities most linked with the Irish, both in writings and in popular imagination, are the trooping and solitary fairies, known to the islanders as the "little people," "good people," or "gentry." In Inis Beag, only the leprechaun and "red man" among the numerous solitary fairies are known. William Butler Yeats numbers the banshee, mermaid, pookah, and water horse among the solitary fairies (Yeats ND :76–77), but these are not regarded as such by the folk (The latter two are animal spirits, or demons, rather than human spirits.); also found in Inis Beag are the sea spirit, or "headless body," and other minor spirits and demons.

Fairies seldom permit themselves to be seen, but most of the islanders have experienced their presence, if only through having objects mysteriously misplaced by them or hearing them sing and cobble. These beings differ considerably in appearance—according to type, sex, and age—but most of them are knee-high and wear green jackets, flat red caps, and buckled shoes. The trooping fairies live in *clochán* and thorn bushes and spend most of their time feasting, singing, dancing, fighting, playing games, and making love. A spirited hurling match played by fairies on the strand was described to me by an observer who had witnessed it from a canoe approaching the island; he and his mates rowed close enough to overhear the creatures call out to each other by name. Small whirlwinds are a sign of their passing, and a farmer who was haying and failed to say the proper "God bless them.", as such a wind stirred his field, was punished by having all of the cocks that he had accumulated blown away. One verse of my ballad, poorly received by most islanders, tells of men who were afraid to board the freighter for several nights after trooping fairies had been seen dining in the mess and a ghost pacing the deck. Fairies disregard human beings most of the time, but they can harm those who disregard or speak ill of them, as well as play "fairy pranks" out of sheer capriciousness. One of their favorite modes of attack is to cast "fairy darts" at their victims; on the mainland, these are prehistoric flint artifacts, but in Inis Beag they are any small pebbles supposedly thrown from the sky to cause bodily harm. An Inis Thiar man collected a number of darts allegedly cast at him by irate gentry, only to have the collection confiscated by the curate in whom he indiscreetly confided. The most feared practice of trooping fairies is that of steal-

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776 787 [753] [562] [789] ing souls of children and leaving in their place changelings, who gradually sicken and die. Since boys are favored over girls, Irish peasants of the region until recently dressed their male offspring in petticoats, sometimes up to the age of 18 years, to deceive the little people. Even now parents are loath to praise the health or beauty of their children for fear that the gentry will overhear and be prompted to victimize their souls.

[114] Solitary fairies are described by Yeats as "withered, old, and solitary, in every way unlike the sociable [trooping fairies]. . . . They dress with all unfairy homeliness, and are, indeed, most sluttish, slouching, peering, mischievous phantoms" (Yeats ND :76). The long occupation of Inis Beag by leprechauns is evidenced by the Garden of the Cobbler and a spring at the back of the island, shaped like the sole of a shoe, which is known as Well of the Boot. Occasionally a leprechaun has been seen in the former location, but only the sound of a tapping hammer has been heard in the latter. Instead of guarding a buried pot of gold at the foot of a rainbow, as popularly conceived, the leprechaun of Inis Beag possesses a small purse in which he keeps but a single coin. Children sometimes are urged to hunt for the hidden purse, as a distraction by harassed parents. The rift valley between Castle and High Villages is thought to be the home of at least one "red man." He wears a pointed cap to denote cleverness and has a laugh, as distinctive as the hammering of the leprechaun, by which his presence is known. A practical joker with poltergeist qualities, the red man prefers to frequent houses, where his mischief is countered with bottles of holy water. From November of 1959 until June of 1963, my wife and I experienced, first in Inis Beag and then in our home in the United States, the antics of an unseen being who opened doors and windows, turned on lights and water faucets, and imbibed our Irish whiskey. Tongue-in-cheek, we placed the blame for these uncanny occurrences on an amiable solitary fairy who had attached himself to us, but eventually I felt compelled to report our unique contact with the Celtic supernatural to the anthropological community—a gesture regarded as "poison oak in the scientific groves of academe" (Messenger 1962:367–373).

776 778 [823] [123]

763 776 The spiritual omens of death are three in Inis Beag: the sound of trooping fairies building a coffin for the victim, soft tapping on the window pane of his bedroom, and the wailing of the banshee during the night before his demise. No one has ever viewed the banshee, but many have heard her cry out in the night, and the keen of Celtic derivation is said to be an imitation of her funeral call. She attaches herself only to certain families which inherit her patrilineally. An aged Inis Beag man was seriously ill with influenza on the night that my wife and I sponsored a dancing party, and a young man departing from it three hours after midnight played his accordion as he walked to his home located near that of the sick person. On learning of this event, the nurse shortly after dawn hurried to her patient to assure him that the wails he might have heard came from the instrument of the inexpert youth and not from the family banshee; at this news, thanatomania was prevented and the man lived another three weeks, when the banshee at last cried and was heard by those at his deathbed. Opinion is divided as to whether it is the fairies or the banshee who announce death by window tapping, but as a practical joke islanders long ago used to tap on the bedroom windows of those persons considered overly superstitious.

[428] [123] 184 763 776 [522]

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persons considered overly superstitious. Interesting to note here is the fact that even before the beginning of this century, strength of belief in the pagan supernatural varied among the folk.

Three water dwellers found in the ocean surrounding Inis Beag are the mermaid, sea spirit, and water horse. At least one and maybe three mermaids are associated with particular locations along the coastline of the island. This spirit usually is found sitting on a rock with her fish tail in the water and combing her long hair, although she has been seen hovering over the surface of the sea in a "robe of mist." Discussion of her in the pubs always induces embarrassment among the men, because her perfectly formed female upper body is nude and not always hidden by her tresses; she appears to delight in exposing herself to the puritanical folk. The sea spirit is called the "headless body" for the reason that his seaweed covered hulk lacks any appendages. Like the seal who bears a human soul, he favors following in the wake of *curach*—bobbing up and down in the water and staring balefully at the seamen with huge eyes. Only by dropping an object containing gold into the ocean deeps, which the spirit finds irresistible, can his pursuit be impeded short of rowing back to the island. My wife and I brought to Inis Beag a foot-high statue of a troll, purchased two years before in Norway, made of moss with large glass eyes, which we hung from the wall of our kitchen (as we had from the dashboard of our car) as a good luck charm. It aroused excitement among fishermen who visited us because of its resemblance to the headless body; one man reasoned that this being must inhabit all of the northern seas, and probably arouses equal consternation among Scottish and Scandinavian seafarers. The water horse is a demon counterpart of the mermaid, with black body of a steed and tail of a giant fish. Until 40 years ago, it lived in the fresh water lake of Inis Beag, where it was seen on certain nights traveling abreast the surface with its head held high and mane waving in the wind. Now it is seen only at sea and infrequently at great distance.

The single pookah of Inis Beag resides in a Copper-Bronze Age tumulus (see Fig. 12), which became a medieval cemetery with rough headstones still in place; located on the western margin of the common land, it is known as the Hill of Ferns. In the Middle Ages, the church urged systematic reinterpretation of Christian and pagan elements (It was advocated as early as 601 by Pope Gregory VII in a letter to priests who were proselytizing the primitive Britons.). This policy is attested in Inis Beag and neighboring islands not only by Christian graveyards being located contiguous to pagan ones, but by Christian church buildings incorporating Druidic temples and Celtic holy wells being appropriated by Christian worshippers. During the day, the "dog of the tumulus," as this demon is called, will twist the limbs of unwary individuals who chance to fall asleep on the mound, and at night it is known to race across the sands of strand and common land, altering its size at will from that of a small dog to that of a bull, to frighten those who might be passing. It appears that Irish emigrants carried both the mermaid and pookah abroad with them as early as the seventeenth century, at least to the West Indies. In doing research among the "Black Irish" of Montserrat during 1965, 1966, and last year, I discovered a mermaid with white skin who guards a pot of gold buried on top of Chance's Mountain, and a pookah in the form of a

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been blessed, to protect the beast from milk pilfering fairies and hag witches. Among the taboos associated with May Day are those prohibiting the visiting of wells before dawn and giving away fire; as regards the latter taboo, to do so is to "give away the luck of the farm" for a year. Flowers are placed on the altars of the two medieval churches in the early morning of May Day, and at one time garlands of flowers shaped like a horseshoe were hung on door posts for luck. Souls of the dead are especially feared on Allhallows' Eve, and are placated in the Catholic tradition a day later on the feast of All Souls. The telling of stories is tabooed on Allhallows' Day, and the fairies are said to spoil wild blackberries for future eating with their before dawn depredations. My wife and I invited in a small group of islanders to celebrate Halloween in 1959, and we spent much of the evening having our fortunes told by an old man as it was done on this night when he was a youth; he poured melted lead through a key handle into a pan of cold water and made his prognostications by interpreting the configurations formed by the quick hardening metal.

Whitsuntide is the week beginning with the feast of Pentecost, or Whitsunday, but in Inis Beag it extends to the feast of Corpus Christi and is known as the "kinkish time," when once again evil forces hold sway in the island. Usually the weather is "heavy and close" and very changeable, I was told, and people tend to be irritable and more depressed than usual. Men do not cut their hair, nor does anyone wash themselves, during these 12 days. Although the pookah is always a danger, it is more active at this time than during the rest of the year, and children and visitors are warned not to fall asleep outside or even to sit down on the ground unless accompanied by others, whose presence will thwart any attempts by the demon to twist their limbs. Some islanders will not undertake major tasks or decide on important issues during Whitsuntide. Whereas Christmas and Easter are considered "lucky times," the "kinkish time" is unlucky, and those born then may have the evil eye or be destined to die violently or take a life.

In 1960, Corpus Christi was celebrated June 16th—two days after pattern day and eight days before St. John's Eve. The latter is one of several midsummer celebrations reported from Ireland which mark the summer solstice. Boys gather wood and tend a huge bonfire lighted just after sunset on the common land of Inis Beag, and a few islanders carry coals from it to their homes and fields for protection and to guarantee the fertility of their wives and female livestock. A man complained to me that an infection in his son's finger was caused by the failure of the boy to procure a coal from the fire as instructed. On that evening, the folk congregate outside of their cottages and along the terrace roads to watch the hundreds of bonfires alight on the mainland coast. In the past, cows were driven between twin bonfires as at Beltaine, and barren women and those yet to marry leaped over the dying flames. One of the most brilliant satirical novels of Irish life—both cruel and insightful—is Tracy's *The Straight and Narrow Path*, the plot of which focuses on the difficulties encountered by a vacationing British anthropologist after he writes for a newspaper an eye witness account of nuns jumping a St. John's Eve bonfire.

The legends are several and varied in Ireland about the life of St. Martin (O Suilleabhain 1957:252–261). There is no saint of this name who is of Irish

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124 831 855 be herded outside; even then the adults were so embarrassed by the term that they found it difficult to communicate with her. One steamer day she aroused stupefaction among a group of men on the strand when she tried—unsuccessfully—to identify the gender of a bullock about to be shipped off.

831 864 Lack of sexual knowledge and the prevalence of misconceptions about sex combine to brand Inis Beag one of the most sexually naive of the world's societies. Only three mothers admitted giving sexual instructions, briefly and incompletely, to their daughters. It is said that boys are better advised than girls, but that the former learn about sex informally from older boys and men, and from observing animals covertly. Most islanders who were questioned about how sexual knowledge is imparted to youths expressed the belief that "after marriage, nature takes its course," thus negating the need for anxiety creating confrontations of parents and offspring. I was unable to discover any cases of childlessness in Inis Beag based on sexual ignorance of spouses, as have been reported from other regions of peasant Ireland.

841 886 [123] Menstruation and the menopause arouse profound misgivings among women of the island, because few of them comprehend their physiological significance. My wife was called on by perplexed women to explain these processes more than any other phenomena related to sex. When they reach puberty, most girls are unprepared for the first menstrual flow and find the experience a traumatic one, especially when their mothers are unwilling or unable to explain it satisfactorily.

886 828 It is commonly believed that the menopause can induce insanity; in order to ward it off, some women have retired from life in their mid-forties and, in at least three contemporary cases, have confined themselves to bed until death years later. Yet the harbingers of "madness" are simply the physical symptoms announcing the menopause, which in Inis Beag include migraine headaches, hot flashes, faintness in crowds and enclosed places, and severe anxiety. Sometimes women who have not yet reached the menopause or have passed it and who fear becoming mentally ill from other causes will experience these symptoms in their anticipatory role playing.

833 [793] [832] As to sexual misconceptions, the folk share with most Western peoples the belief that men by nature are far more sexually disposed than women. The latter are informed by the curate and in the home that sexual relations with their husbands are a "duty" which must be "endured," for to refuse coitus is a mortal sin. Women frequently affix the guilt for male libidinal strivings on the enormous intake of potatoes by their spouses (Among the Anang of Nigeria, men fear the excessive sexual demands of their wives and place the blame on clitoridectomy.). Asked to compare the sexual proclivities of Inis Beag men and women, one woman said, "Men can wait a long time for 'it,' but we can wait a lot longer." There is much evidence to indicate that the female orgasm is unknown or not experienced (or considered a deviant response not to be divulged). A middle-aged bachelor, who considers himself wise in the ways of the outside world and has a reputation for making love to willing tourists during the summer, described the violent bodily reactions of a girl to his fondling and asked for an explanation; when told the "facts of life," he admitted not knowing that women also could achieve climax, although he was aware that some of them apparently enjoyed lovemaking. Inis Beag men

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and the never ending toil needed to maintain present subsistence standards; the spying and malicious gossiping of their fellows and the ubiquity of jealousy and envy; the isolation of the island, particularly during winter months; numbing boredom and the dearth of social activities; for women, the lack of freedom and of attention and affection from their spouses, as well as the necessity of enduring sexual relations; and, as stated above, hypochondria. Much has been written about isolation and its depressive effects on the islanders, and the folk themselves constantly complain of being shut off from the world and prey to wind, rain, fog, and raging sea. But isolation need not lead inevitably to depression, for my wife and I conducted research in another island of Ireland—far distant from and even more inaccessible than Inis Beag—where the inhabitants do not feel isolated and are not depressed.

I have expanded the clinical usage of the term hypochondria to include fears of the spirit as well as fears of the body, for ill health can as often be induced by supernatural forces, and death—whether by disease, injury, or aging—is the ultimate fear with its threat of eternal damnation. Colds, influenza, dyspepsia, migraine headaches, teeth decay, the crippling effects of joint and muscle ailments, hypermetrophy, and mental illness are paramount among health concerns. "Flu" epidemics are frequent in the island and are a chief cause of death among people who have become weakened by old age. As the folk advance in years, they come to spend more time in bed and by the turf fire and venture out less during the winter and when it rains. Drafts are avoided whenever possible, and clothes dampened by seas which wash the canoes or by rain are changed for dry ones at the first opportunity. Colds, flu, indigestion, and headaches more than any other afflictions send the islanders to the nurse for drugs and to their own folk remedies for relief. Dyspepsia is known as "wind" and is thought to result from diet, but the nurses say that most cases of indigestion are the result of tension—"nervous stomach." Nine cases of migraine were reported in Inis Beag during 1959, but many other islanders, most of whom are women, suffer from "nervous headache" which can approach migraine in intensity of pain. Neither my wife nor I were ill during the winter of 1959 and 1960, even though we were abroad in all sorts of inclement weather against the advice of our neighbors; when we began picking wild garlic to season our food, it was reasoned that the condiment afforded us protection against the flu, which reached almost epidemic proportions that year, and as a result this folk medicine was used more widely and consistently than usual.

Nativists and primitivists praise the health and hardiness of the folk and boast of the absence of rheumatism and allied infirmities among them and the sharpness of their sight. But, just as most adults past 30 years of age suffer from decay and loss of teeth, they also suffer from muscle and joint ailments, caused by the "damp and cold," and from far-sightedness. It is not known how many folk wear glasses in the privacy of their homes, but only two persons, both men, wear them publicly—and self-consciously when they do. Most glasses are not prescription made but are purchased in mainland shops after many pairs displayed on the counters have been tested, and often a single pair will serve the needs of all the elders of a household. The islanders among themselves constantly complain of these and other ailments, although some will praise the health and hardiness of the local

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538 539 or Sean O'Sullivan's recent *Folktales of Ireland*. But a further word must be said of the tales recited by the *seanchaí*. Popular among local legends are those dealing with such topics as the famine, evictions and other excesses of past landlords, visits to the island by the Black and Tans seeking political refugees, shipwrecks, and tragedies at sea among fishermen. Stories of the supernatural center around the actions of fairies, the pookah and banshee, those with the evil eye, phantom ships, mermaids and sea demons, and material objects possessing human attributes and 538 volitions. These local legends sometimes qualify as anecdotes, and it is humorous 522 anecdotes which the folk refer to as jokes. Outsiders—such as returned Yanks— [177] are responsible for introducing true jokes, but often these are not told and soon are forgotten, especially if they are "dirty jokes." There is no indigenous dirty joking tradition because of sexual puritanism. I have heard men use various verbal devices—innuendos, puns, and asides—that they believed bear sexual connotations; [123] relatively speaking, they are pallid. In the song that I composed, one line of a [832] verse refers to an islander who arose late on the morning of the shipwreck after "dreaming perhaps of a beautiful mate;" this is regarded as a highly suggestive phrase, and I have seen it redden cheeks and lower glances in a pub.

538 [221] [178] [521] [561] [562] Storytelling in the past took place mostly between the last week of October and early January, when inclement weather forced a slackening of the fishing regime, and the Christmas season kept people in and near their homes. Nowadays, card playing almost nightly during November and part of December by many of the men has become a substitute activity, which excludes the participation of women and children who once composed a part of the audience addressed by the storyteller. At any one time during this period, several groups met to hear Inis 538 573 Beag narrators; a *scéalaí* or *seanchaí* might be visited by a group and serve as host, or he might be invited into or visit on his own another household, and word of his presence would quickly draw an audience. The session lasted from eight or nine o'clock until midnight, and a tale might be so long that its telling occupied an entire evening, or even two or three consecutive nights. After completing a brief narrative, the storyteller might call on a colleague in the audience to recite a sequel, or the hearers might request that he continue or urge another to contribute a tale.

[857] [562] The average sized audience was composed of a dozen persons, although as many as 20 might attend a session. Small children seldom were allowed in the room unless they were members of the family of the host, nor were women of another household; the children were admonished to sit quietly and not to talk or whisper, and the women knitted or crocheted while listening. Seated in a semi-circle around the hearth, the hearers were faced by the narrator who was seated [574] on the right side of the fireplace, and the wife of the host on the left. Refreshments never were served, but a clay pipe was passed around among the men and very old women. The host furnished pipe and tobacco, and the pipe was passed back to him by each person in turn after being puffed on for several minutes. Only if the story was a long one was the pipe proffered by the host to the narrator from time to time.

538 561 [868] Most storytellers were men past the age of 60 years, but some were between 40 and 60 and a few even younger. An old narrator of reputation often called on a young man to recite in order to give him practice, if he felt that the

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and coast guard personnel. Only four tunes are played by Inis Beag accordionists to accompany dancing.

Instrumentalists, lilters, and singers traditionally performed individually; music was played by a fiddler or flutist and sung by a lilter only to serve solo and figure dancers, and a singer never was joined by others in chorus or accompanied by an instrument. But now the dancers, young and old alike, choose to dance to the lively jigs and reels of the *céili* band, which plays modern Irish "country dance music." My wife and I discovered that the folk preferred our *céili* band records for dancing, and were reticent about performing to the music of our many records of fiddling, piping, and flute and tin whistle playing of exceptional quality. On several occasions, we played jazz and classical recordings to groups assembled in our home, to which the islanders listened politely but indifferently. Our *céili* band records seemed to be quite as acceptable as an accordion at dances and in the pub, and I frequently shared equally with an instrumentalist the time spent in furnishing music for a night long party.

Of the Irish song tradition, Donal O'Sullivan writes: "There is, indeed, a consensus of informed opinion as to its exceeding beauty. . . . In sheer abundance, also, it is probably not surpassed by that of any nation of comparable area and population: for this small and thinly inhabited island has yielded . . . many thousands of melodies of unusual diversity—all of them the anonymous product of the people . . ." (O'Sullivan 1961:5). The Inis Beag folk, as in the case of their music, share but a small portion of this vast body of song. Only a few songs sung publicly by less than a dozen islanders are in Irish, and these are predominantly local compositions. Most of the songs have texts in English and are common to the mainland as well, and of these but a handful are true folk songs—"anonymous product of the people"—rather than broadsides (printed, sold, and memorized) of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Tunes and songs, just as tale types and motifs, of the Irish often are shared with British and Continental neighbors, and it is hard to know their points of origin and paths of diffusion. Some islanders believe that a few of their songs—such as "The Pretty Maid Milking Her Cow"—were obtained by overhearing the fairies at play. Only one composer is active in the vicinity of Inis Beag at the present time; he is a young man from Inis Thiar who excels at composing songs in Irish based on recent events of importance in and near the two islands. A song of his, which describes the incidents arising out of the grounding of the steamer on a sand bar off Inis Thiar several years ago, is one of the most sung ballads in the region.

Singing is a popular pastime in Inis Beag, particularly among men in the pubs, and several islanders of both sexes have outstanding voices by Irish standards. I tape recorded only 38 songs (13 in Gaelic) and found their major themes to be sentimental, patriotic, and humorous—stressing death, unrequited love, emigration and the parting of relatives and friends, conflict in various forms with the English, and lives of the political "martyrs." Love songs, lullabies, humorous songs, religious songs, laments, drinking songs, and songs of occupation (such as ploughing, milking, and spinning) are the major indigenous Irish folk song categories (O'Sullivan 1961:39), but some are absent and others are underrepresented in Inis Beag. Also absent are carols, as well as boat songs like those of the Gaelic speaking Scottish fishermen.

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533 [539] the Gaelic speaking Scottish fishermen. Only a few tunes accommodate the songs sung in the island, and the text is far more important to listeners than the ability of a singer to carry the melody. Much admired is the person who can sing a long ballad without pausing or making a mistake, and each episode of the song is listened to attentively, while an occasional, "God be with you.", "Good man.", or "That's it." from the audience urges the singer on or rewards his efforts.

123 533 177 [186] The records of songs that my wife and I brought to Inis Beag with us feature performers who sing in both Gaelic and English, and the latter were favored by the islanders. Contrary to our expectations, they disliked our Gael Linn records from Dublin, because they could not understand the Irish of the singers; nor did they care for a commercial record cut in a nearby island, for the ethnocentric reason that the singers there are thought to be inferior to their own. We soon had to learn folk songs, as we often were "called out" to sing, but our American songs although admired as to melody, did not arouse the interest of our listeners as to text. "The Cowboy's Lament," once learned, came to be "my song" and was always requested at parties; it is now sung by others in my absence, but never when I am [834] in the island. Just as this song appeals to the masochism of the folk, my wife's singing of "The Lavender Cowboy"—"who had only two hairs on his chest"—in a pub aroused their sexual puritanism, and was never sung again after its introduction because of the embarrassed response of the men. Since we ordered many Irish folksong books in order to learn texts, island singers borrowed them to commit to memory additional texts themselves, and they also requested that we give them texts of "cowboy songs" taken from records.

123 533 My ballad was prompted by the absence of an indigenous composer, some impromptu rhyming that I had done in the pubs, an eye witness account of the rescue (written by my wife but dictated by me, according to local opinion) which appeared in a Dublin newspaper, and was urged on me by my respondents. I chose the air of the popular broadside song, "Brian O'Linn," and copied the lyric style of its composer, and based as many verses as possible on the more prevalent rumors which arose in the months following the shipwreck. Copying the folklore idiom as accurately as I could, I also employed many Irish terms—especially place-names—and eschewed Yank expressions while incorporating local ones at every [1177] opportunity. In time, island balladiers came to substitute words and phrases, and even stanzas, as they molded the song more closely to their tongue and milieu. Some lines came to be used as proverbs and others to stimulate a variety of conversational responses.

535 175 Little is known of the history of Irish dancing. The earliest references to round and long dances are from the sixteenth century, and they appear to be older than the single, or "step," dances. The step and figure dances of today were created by the dancing masters of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (O'Keeffe and O'Brien 1912:13–27). Step dancing preceded figure dancing in Inis Beag, although there is a difference of opinion among elders as to whether or 535 not the coast guard families introduced figure dancing a hundred years ago. Young 178 adults no longer step dance, although since 1960 children have been stimulated [874] to learn the skill through instruction in the school and by watching and participating in the dances of the students attending summer language school; so this may

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Women tend to drink very little at parties, in part because of the embarrassment caused them by visiting the outside toilet with men looking on.

The party commences with several sets danced in quick succession. There is room for only one dance group initially because of the small size of the kitchen and the large number of guests filling the house. It is difficult to move about the two rooms with the press of bodies, and the crowd within is matched by the cluster of men around the front door awaiting their turn to dance. Unmarried women tend to sit and stand on one side of the kitchen and men on the other, while married people congregate in the other room. Children in their best dress sit quietly together and watch the festivities tirelessly until the guests depart. Crowding at the party necessitates that men and women will be pressed together both as dancers and viewers, and that persons will sit on one anothers' laps, including women on the laps of men occasionally. The islanders strain to display indifference, as they do in watching a full-bodied woman step dance, at least until the intake of alcohol causes a few to betray their emotions.

Usually two or even three accordionists (and the visiting anthropologist with his phonograph) are invited to attend, and they spell one another. After an hour or so of dancing, singers and step dancers perform between the sets while stout is poured; they may be called out by the urging of the guests, or by the host or one of his choosing who acts as a master of ceremonies and directs all of the activities of the party. Stout may be distributed during the sets, but most hosts prefer that it be done during pauses, so that less is spilled by the dancing and milling crowd. The pourer with his bucket follows the movement of the mugs and glasses as they are passed about, and each man on having his container filled drains it quickly and surrenders it to another nearby. Most of the young men visit the pubs before the party and may do so again once or twice before the pubs close.

Midway during the night, the table of "the room" is set, and refreshments are served to all of the guests in shifts. First the women are served, then the children, followed by the young men who do not drink stout, and finally the other men. Both in viewing the proceedings from benches and in eating, the children are separated as to sex. The menu resembles that of the usual Inis Beag meal and includes tea, bread spread with butter and jam, cakes, and sometimes hard candy. Between the many sittings, the dishes and utensils are washed in a bucket and the table reset. Dancing continues in the kitchen during this period, and after everyone is served the table is moved to a corner and a second set is formed. The remainder of the night is spent in dancing, but the pauses which punctuate the sets become longer and the songs and step dances by guests more frequent as dawn approaches.

My wife and I sponsored a Christmas party in 1959 in the home of an islander and invited the entire population of Inis Beag. Two hours after midnight, when I was absent briefly escorting an old man to his cottage, a fight broke out between two family factions which sent all of the guests scurrying home. The following day, everyone whom we met commiserated with us "for the shame of it," and we were told of many other parties in the past which had ended in the same manner, so that we would not think our affair a failure. In recent years, "rowdyism" on the part of youths who have "taken too much" has increased at

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parties, so that many islanders will not give them for fear of possible damage to houses and outbuildings. The reason why one man is assigned to the barrel of stout and a "firm" master of ceremonies is favored is to curb drunkenness and factional fighting. Small parties are coming to replace the large ones of the past, with invitations tendered secretly and at the last moment to avoid attracting "hooligans." The format, however, has remained the same.

Pubs

Both pubs in Inis Beag do a thriving business. There are some folk who purchase all of their provisions, drinks, and tobacco in only one of the pubs, others who buy most of them in one but occasionally do business in the second, and still others who scrupulously balance their buying between the two. The first group is composed of near kin of the publicans, and the second of those who are economically beholden to the king and utilize his pub mostly, or who dislike him and give the lion's share of their business to the other. This pattern is broken only when one of the pubs is out of a commodity which the other has in stock, one of them is closed for whatever reason, a "big night" is taking place at one of them, or a dispute interferes. During the day, provisions are purchased in the shop—by children, women, and sometimes men; the women and children make their visits as brief as possible, but the men are likely to stay for at least one "pint" of stout and a "smoke." Other visitors in the daytime are chronic drinkers, men who are working nearby and use the pub for a break, and men reciprocating for economic services rendered. The pub is the province of the adult males at night, and the only women who enter are the teachers, visiting emigrants, and tourists. Seldom is step dancing done unless outsiders are present, and when women are in the audience they will be called out to form a set or to dance solo or be paired with an islander. Some nights only two or three of the folk will put in an appearance at the pub, but on other nights as many as 20 persons will crowd into the narrow room, while others in the hallway and outside wait to take their turn inside. Another half-dozen men may sit in the snug drinking and talking together privately.

Men come to the pub after dark usually in groups of two, three, or four. Reciprocity dictates the drinking procedure, with each man in a group taking his turn at "standing a round" for as long as the evening lasts. Men who do not like to drink much or have little money will come to the pub singly or with another in like circumstances, so that they will not become victims of the custom of reciprocation. My first experience with this custom—in 1958 in a neighboring island—almost ended in tragedy for me, as I was with six men who insisted on drinking "glasses" of whiskey; only my deep commitment to research and a heavy meal a short time before prevented a "third round knockout." The first hour after the men arrive in the pub is a quiet one, as they sit in silence or whisper to one another while drinking pints in rapid succession. As their shyness gradually is overcome by alcohol, they become more talkative and speak in louder tones to a wider circle of their fellows. At least two hours must pass before individuals have "courage" enough to tell stories to all assembled or to sing. The best singers will be

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The best singers will be called out with shouts of encouragement from the others, and some men need as many as five minutes of urging before they will perform. In the case of the man who is particularly reticent about singing, those sitting on either side of him will grasp his hands with one of theirs and swing his arms backward and forward until he commences to sing in the suggested rhythm of the arm movements. Sometimes this continues throughout the song, and later in the evening it is done with other singers as the sense of male "camaraderie" grows apace.

Seldom does fighting break out in the pub, for the publican will not serve drinks to those whom he feels have taken too much, and he will order everyone out if there is a threat of violence. Visiting women invariably are treated politely no matter how boisterous the men become. On a nearby island, my wife and I saw a Yank brutally beaten and thrown out of a pub by several men when he spoke "disrespectfully" in Gaelic before us and another visiting women. An elderly widower of Inis Beag was much criticized when after dancing with my wife in a pub he brushed his check against hers briefly in his exuberance; she thought nothing of it, but many of the folk apologized to her for his action, and our relationship with the man thereafter was strained. Visitors must be careful about how they participate in the drinking pattern of the pub. If they drink by themselves or only with outsiders and never buy rounds for the islanders present, they are despised secretly; but if they stand rounds often with the obvious end in view of earning acceptance, they are considered "fools." The several folk who will take advantage of a stranger who is generous with rounds in the pub are subjected to severe censure. Each year, my wife and I donate a barrel of stout to a pub on St. Partick's Day to be drunk by islanders who come that night—to commemorate the shipwreck and rescue (whose anniversary is nine days before); a verse of my ballad refers to certain folk who will not accept drinks unless they can reciprocate—"People will say the free stout brought me in."

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12 cultivate that "sharpness of ear . . . feeling for half-tones and shades and subtleties, and . . . wary alertness" which characterize ethnographic endeavor as an art as well as an epistemology.

181 The use by the folk of "wings of fancy," "honeyed words," and
195 "obfuscations"—popularly known as "blarney"—reflects a long tradition
of verbal skill. It is a vital component of Irish and Inis Beag "charm,"
[178] which often is a product of a delicately poised set of defense mechanisms; beneath it can lie feelings of inferiority and dislike, envy, and jealousy of others. Blarney can very effectively serve to shield genuine thoughts
[538] and feelings and thus protect the ego. Irish folklore and literature also reflect this tradition of verbal skill, and it is probably expressed most formidably in James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake*. (At least one folklorist has collected "Joycean utterances" from Irish peasants.)

• 123 Most of our information came from observation and unguided interviews. It proved impossible to take field notes openly, except when collecting innocuous data—such as the number of livestock owned by each householder—from a few particular persons. Thus, we were forced to limit our visits to less than two hours, after which we immediately
[562] transcribed what our combined memories could resuscitate. Despite frequent explanations of our presence in Inis Beag, which were candid and truthful, it was thought by the islanders that I was interested only in archeological sites and oral literature, and that my wife was not a trained and experienced co-worker; this, obviously, reflects their previous experiences with scientists and their conception of the position of women in society. Their inability to evaluate adequately our intentions proved
[609] to be a research boon. For once "accepted" (a relative term, since no outsider is ever accepted) after many months in the island, we were allowed to listen to and participate in conversations and activities from which we would otherwise have been excluded.

123 Our data on sex came from my involvement as a participant-
*831 observer in personal and often intimate conversations with men and my wife's counseling of women who were bothered by such matters as explaining and coping with menstruation, menopause, mental illness, the sexual curiosity of their children, and "excessive" sexual demands of their spouses. Our sexual knowledge and sympathy coupled with their needs and inquisitiveness gave rise to a "counselor-client" relationship between many of the folk and ourselves. They came to speak freely, albeit indirectly at times, with each of us about this sphere of behavior which arouses so much anxiety and fear. I must mention that the relationship

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arose partly out of our desire to alleviate distress and not solely to collect information. We had performed the same role seven years earlier among primitive Nigerians, and for similar reasons. However, the Africans were uninhibited, talked freely with us about sex, and were not offended by what we subsequently wrote.

Another important source of information on sex was the island nurses, who supplied us with accounts of their own observations over an eight-year period and gave us access to pertinent medical records. My wife and I believe that our information is, for the most part, reliable, but that some of it may well be erroneous. This report will, we are afraid, offend and alienate some of our Inis Beag friends, for whom we hold deep affection; they do not comprehend the aims and values of anthropology and may regard our reporting of sexual beliefs and behavior as a breach of friendship and trust. Certainly our findings will be denied by many Irish readers.

More than any other type of research, culture and personality investigations are needed in Ireland today. Social and cultural anthropologists, rural sociologists, folklorists, and geographers in small numbers have managed to describe and analyze the major sociocultural forms of the Irish folk, but personality generalizations, by and large, have been the by-products of research into other areas and have tended to be impressionistic. Some of the most penetrating studies of Irish character have been made "at a distance" and through the analysis of projective systems and narrow units of culture, such as drinking patterns (Bales 1962). Some Irish writers—"intuitive anthropologists" I call them—also have had insightful things to say about Irish character (usually at a distance too, from church and state). What is sorely needed is a holistic community study done by a culture and personality specialist—a person skilled not only in ethnography, social psychology, and psychiatry (and able to administer projective tests), but well versed in Irish history, literature, and contemporary affairs as well.

SEXUAL REPRESSION: ITS MANIFESTATIONS

Both lack of sexual knowledge and misconceptions about sex among adults combine to brand Inis Beag as one of the most sexually naive of the world's societies.

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the world's societies. Sex never is discussed in the home when children are about; only three mothers admitted giving advice, briefly and incompletely, to their daughters. We were told that boys are better advised than girls, but that the former learn about sex informally from older boys and men and from observing animals. Most respondents who were questioned about sexual instructions given to youths expressed the belief that "after marriage nature takes its course," thus negating the need for anxiety-creating and embarrassing personal confrontation of parents and offspring. We were unable to discover any cases of childlessness based on sexual ignorance of spouses, as reported from other regions of peasant Ireland. Also, we were unable to discover knowledge of the sexual categories utilized by researchers in sex: insertion of tongue while kissing, male mouth on female breast, female hand on penis, cunnilingus, fellatio, femoral coitus, anal coitus, extramarital coitus, manifest homosexuality, sexual contact with animals, fetishism, and sado-masochistic behavior. Some of these activities may be practiced by particular individuals and couples; however, without a doubt they are deviant forms in Inis Beag, about which information is difficult to come by.

Menstruation and menopause arouse profound misgivings among women of the island, because few of them comprehend their physiological significance. My wife was called on to explain these processes more than any other phenomena related to sex. When they reach puberty, most girls are unprepared for the first menstrual flow and find the experience a traumatic one—especially when their mothers are unable to provide a satisfactory explanation for it. And it is commonly believed that the menopause can induce "madness"; in order to ward off this condition, some women have retired from life in their mid-forties and, in a few cases, have confined themselves to bed until death, years later. Others have so retired as a result of depressive and masochistic states. Yet the harbingers of "insanity" are simply the physical symptoms announcing the onset of menopause. In Inis Beag, these include severe headaches, hot flashes, faintness in crowds and enclosed places, and severe anxiety. Mental illness is also held to be inherited or caused by inbreeding (or by the Devil, by God punishing a sinner, or by malignant pagan beings) and stigmatizes the family of the afflicted. One old man came close to revealing what is probably the major cause of neuroses and psychoses in Ireland, when he explained the incarceration of an Inis Beag curate in a mental institution for clerics as caused by his constant association with a pretty housekeeper, who "drove him mad from frustration." This elder advocated that only plain-appearing older women (who would not "gab"

Sex and Repression in an Irish Folk Community

Many kinds of behavior disassociated from sex in other societies such as nudity and physiological evacuation, are considered sexual in Inis Beag. Nudity is abhorred by the islanders, and the consequences of this attitude are numerous and significant for health and survival. Only infants have their entire bodies sponged once a week, on Saturday night; children, adolescents, and adults, on the same night, wash only their faces, necks, lower arms, hands, lower legs, and feet. Several times my wife and I created intense embarrassment by entering a room in which a man had just finished his weekly ablutions and was barefooted; once when this occurred, the man hurriedly pulled on his stockings and said with obvious relief, "Sure, it's good to get your clothes on again." Clothing always is changed in private, sometimes within the secrecy of the bedcovers, and it is usual for the islanders to sleep in their underclothes.

Despite the fact that Inis Beag men spend much of their time at sea in their canoes, as far as we could determine none of them can swim. Four rationales are given for this deficiency: the men are confident that nothing will happen to them, because they are excellent seamen and weather forecasters; a man who cannot swim will be more careful; it is best to drown immediately when a canoe capsizes far out in the ocean rather than swim futilely for minutes or even hours, thus prolonging the agony; and, finally, "When death is on a man, he can't be saved." The truth of the matter is that they have never dared to bare their bodies in order to learn the skill. Some women claim to have "bathed" at the back of the island during the heat of summer, but this means wading in small pools with skirts held knee-high, in complete privacy. Even the nudity of household pets can arouse anxiety, particularly when they are sexually aroused during time of heat. In some homes, dogs are whipped for licking their genitals and soon learn to indulge in this practice outdoors. My wife, who can perform Irish step-dances and sing many of the popular folk songs, was once requested to sing a seldom-heard American Western ballad; she chose "The Lavendar Cowboy," who "had only two hairs on his chest." The audience response was perfunctory and, needless to say, she never again was "called out" to sing that particular song.

The drowning of seamen, who might have saved themselves had they been able to swim, is not the only result of the sexual symbolism of nudity; men who were unwilling to face the nurse when ill, because it might have meant baring their bodies to her, were beyond help when finally treated. While my wife and I were on the island, a nurse was assaulted by the mother of a young man for diagnosing his illness and

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[155] bathing his chest in the mother's absence. (In this case, Oedipal and sexual attitudes probably were at work in tandem.)

158 It must be pointed out that nudity is also shunned for "health"
751 reasons, for another obtrusive Inis Beag character trait is hypochondria.
[291] In some cases, however, it is hard to determine whether concern with
[834] modesty or health is dominant in a particular behavioral response. Fear
[753] of colds and influenza is foremost among health concerns; rheumatism and related muscular joint ailments, migraine headaches and other psychosomatic disorders, tooth decay, indigestion ("nervous stomach"), and hypermetropia are other widespread pathologies which cause worry among the folk—not to mention those of supernatural origin.

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[863]
[825 Secrecy surrounds the acts of urination and defecation. The evacuation of infants before siblings and strangers is discouraged, and animals that discharge in the house are driven out. Chickens that habitually "dirty" their nests while setting are soon killed and eaten.
[562] Although some women drink spirits privately, they seldom do so at
[273] parties. In part this is because of the embarrassment involved in visiting the outside toilet with men in the "street" looking on. One of the most
[241] carefully guarded secrets of Inis Beag, unreported in the many works describing island culture, is the use of human manure mixed with sand as a fertilizer. We were on the island eight months before we discovered that compost is not "street drippings" and "scraw," but decomposed feces. With "turf" becoming more difficult to procure from the mainland, some islanders have taken to importing coal and processed peat and burning cattle dung. The dung is prepared for use in difficult-to-reach plots at the back of the island when tourists are few in number; it is burned covertly because of the overtones of sex and poverty. Another custom that my wife and I learned of late in our research, due to the secrecy surrounding it, concerns the thickening of wool; men are required to urinate in a container and tread the wool therein with their bare feet.

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[154] Other major manifestations of sexual repression in Inis Beag are the lack of a "dirty joke" tradition (at least as the term is understood by ethnologists and folklorists) and the style of dancing, which allows little bodily contact among participants. I have heard men use various verbal devices—innuendoes, puns, and asides—that they believed bore
• [123] sexual connotations; relatively speaking, they were pallid. In the song that I composed, one line of a verse refers to an island bachelor arising late in the day after "dreaming perhaps of a beautiful mate"; this is

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regarded as a highly suggestive phrase, and I have seen it redden cheeks and lower glances in a pub. Both step- and set-dancing are practiced in Inis Beag, although the former type is dying out. This rigid-body dancing, from which sex is removed by shifting attention below the hips, appears to have originated in Ireland during the early nineteenth century. The set patterns keep partners separated most of the time; but, even so, some girls refuse to dance, because it involves touching a boy. Inis Beag men, while watching a woman step-dance, stare fixedly at her feet, and they take pains to appear indifferent when crowding at a party necessitates holding women on their laps and rubbing against them when moving from room to room. But they are extremely sensitive, nevertheless, to the entire body of the dancer and to these casual contacts, as are the women. Their covert emotional reactions (which become overt as much drink is taken) are a form of catharsis.

SEXUAL REPRESSION: ITS HISTORICAL CAUSES

Analysts of Irish character have put forth various hypotheses to account for sexual repression, ranging from the sophisticated to the absurd. The former can be classified under three rubrics: historical (e.g., the influence of ascetic monasticism, Augustinianism, and Jansenism), sociocultural (e.g., the Oedipus complex in the Irish family and male solidarity), and psychological (e.g., masochism). Beyond serious scientific consideration are such hypotheses as the loss of the Irish tongue, lack of a Catholic aristocracy, fear of Protestant libertinism, and the ever-appealed-to factors of race, climate, and the famine. In the following paragraphs, I will quote excerpts from Irish authors and from critical observers of the Irish scene, including social scientists, rather than dissect their views myself.

Paul Blanshard, in his polemical but insightful (and, in my estimation, often understated) work, *The Irish and Catholic Power*, says that "whatever the explanation, the total sexual expression of the Irish people is much less than it is in other countries, and that the Catholic crusade against normal sexual life has actually created a nation of men and women who try to drown their fundamental instincts." In attempting to account for sexual repression on such a scale, he writes:

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their exhortations. The most common theme is "controlling one's passions," but two others have often been addressed in the missionizing effort: abstaining from intoxicating drink and maintaining the faith as an emigrant. Collections are made by children to support the endeavor, and a list of contributors and their respective donations is displayed publicly. This technique of social control is also used by the curate at the several yearly offerings. A mission creates an emotionally charged atmosphere on the island, which continues for weeks after the departure of the clerics.

The seeds of repression are planted early in childhood by parents and kin through instruction supplemented by rewards and punishments, conscious imitation, and unconscious internalization. Although mothers bestow considerable affection and attention on their offspring, especially on their sons, physical love as manifested in intimate handling and kissing is rare in Inis Beag. Even breast feeding is uncommon because of its sexual connotation, and verbal affection comes to replace contact affection by late infancy. Any form of direct or indirect sexual expression—such as masturbation, mutual exploration of bodies, use of either standard or slang words relating to sex, and open urination and defecation—is severely punished by word or deed. Care is taken to cover the bodies of infants in the presence of siblings and outsiders, and sex is never discussed before children. Several times my wife inadvertently inquired as to whether particular women were pregnant, using that word before youths, only to be "hushed" or to have the conversation postponed until the young people could be herded outside. The adults were so embarrassed by the term that they found it difficult to communicate with her after the children had departed. She once aroused stupefaction among men on the strand when she attempted unsuccessfully to identify the gender of a bullock about to be shipped off.

It is in the home that the separation of sexes, so characteristic of Inis Beag life, is inaugurated among siblings in early childhood. Boys and girls in the family remain apart not only when interacting with the parent of the same sex at work, but when playing in and near the cottage and traveling to and from school. Parents and their older offspring read popular religious journals, found in most homes, many of the articles in which deal with sexual morality of the Irish Catholic variety.

One sociologist (Berger 1963: 66–92) classifies social control methods as those which involve physical violence or its threat (e.g., political and legal sanctions), those which result in economic pressures (e.g., occupation and market place relations), and, finally, those which

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626 own words and actions in the presence of others so that the fires of factionalism are not ignited. Equally feared are informers of the curate and relatives or close friends of persons in an audience who might be offended by a heedless remark brought to their attention by the listeners.

83 It is sometimes heard in Ireland, from those aware of, and willing
164 to admit, the fact, that the inability of most Irish to "share themselves"
182 with one another, even husbands and wives, is a heritage of the fear of
[626] gossip—a fear that one's intimate revelations will become common knowledge and lead to censure and "loss of face." A more likely explanation, according to those of Freudian bent, is the Oedipus configuration, which numbers among its many effects the following: the prevalence of romantic attachments and the rarity of conjugal love; the lack of sexual foreplay, marked by little or no concern with the female breast; the brevity of the coital act and the frequent spurning of the woman following it; the need to degrade the woman in the sexual encounter and the belief that the "good" woman does not like sex, and, conversely, that the sexually disposed woman is by virtue of the fact "bad." All of these widely reported phenomena bespeak the overwhelming influence of the mother image.

157 Ridicule and opprobrium, as well as satire in song and tale, are
[626] effective control mechanisms in light of the emphasis placed by Inis Beag
[123] folk on saving face. Most islanders could not believe that I was author of the ballad referred to in footnote 5 because several stanzas attack my character; they find it difficult to conceive of anyone publicly proclaiming their own faults, under any circumstances. Opinions, once formed, are
[208] clung to tenaciously, even in light of obviating circumstances, since to
[577] alter them would be an admittance that they were ill advised in the first instance. The folk pride themselves on being able to judge a stranger's character immediately on meeting him, and this initial impression is
[533] rarely modified no matter how long their interaction continues. A seldom
[539] revealed tradition of satirical balladry exists in Inis Beag, but its employ-
[576] ment is infrequent and then calculated according to singer and audience so as not to offend directly. Apprehensiveness and anxiety about real and imagined ego assaults by others are dominant personality traits of the islanders.